United Nations A/57/710–S/2003/62

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
17 January 2003

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session
Agenda items 36 and 160

Security Council
Fifty-eighth year

The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 16 January 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to draw your attention to the latest acts of terrorism perpetrated against the citizens of Israel.

This past Sunday evening, 12 January 2003, at approximately 7 p.m. (local time), two armed Palestinian terrorists infiltrated Moshav Gadish in northern Israel and began firing indiscriminately. Security forces responded and engaged the terrorists in a lengthy gun battle, in which five Israeli personnel were wounded. Eli Biton, age 48 and father of four children, was killed in the attack. The terrorist group Islamic Jihad, whose operatives act freely and openly in Palestinian territory, claimed responsibility.

At about the same time, Israeli security forces spotted a group of terrorists, armed with Kalashnikov rifles, cartridges, hand grenades and other explosives, attempting to infiltrate the Israeli border near Nitzana, in the western Negev. An Israeli patrol on the scene engaged the terrorists. In the ensuring battle, the commander of the patrol, Sgt. (res.) Mikhail Kazakov, was fatally wounded and died soon after.

On Tuesday, 14 January 2003, three Kassam rockets fired from the Gaza Strip landed in the southern Israeli town of Sderot. Only by chance, the rockets landed in relatively sparsely populated areas, one on a fence surrounding a school and two in areas on the outskirts of town. Two civilians were injured in the attack, one a municipal worker and the other a child, who was injured by shrapnel. The terrorist organization Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.

Tuesday's attack was not the first time the town of Sderot has been a target of indiscriminate aerial bombardment against civilians by Palestinian terrorists operating from Palestinian Authority-controlled territory in the Gaza Strip. Numerous prior attacks have been detailed in letters dated 16 April 2001 (A/55/901-S/2001/364), 11 February 2002 (A/56/819-S/2002/164), 5 March 2002 (A/56/857-

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S/2002/233), 26 July 2002 (A/56/1014-S/2002/841) and 27 September 2002 (A/57/438-S/2002/1089).

And just this morning, an armed terrorist infiltrated the community of Gush Katif and opened fire on an Israel Defence Forces position nearby. Israeli forces responded and were able to disarm and arrest the terrorist. On his person, Israeli soldiers discovered an automatic rifle, four hand grenades and four ammunition cartridges.

Israel holds the Palestinian leadership fully responsible for these attacks in light of its ongoing failure to fulfil its most basic responsibility to prevent its territory from serving as a base for terrorist attacks and in light of its continuing incitement of the population to hatred and acts of violence against Israeli civilians. The Palestinian leadership has utterly failed to take any steps towards the fulfilment of its obligations under signed agreements, international law and Security Council resolutions to end violence, terrorism and incitement, arrest known terrorists and bring them to justice.

Until the Palestinian leadership genuinely renounces its strategy of terror and takes concerted action to disarm and delegitimize terrorist groups operating freely in its territory, Israel will be compelled to take the necessary defensive measures to protect its citizens from harm. Only once terrorism is fully and finally rejected as an acceptable tactic can we advance to a process of negotiations, which are the only means of achieving a genuine and lasting peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

I submit the present letter in follow-up to numerous letters detailing the campaign of Palestinian terrorism that began in September 2000.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 36 and 160, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Dan **Gillerman**
Permanent Representative